

Equitable Transit Oriented Development Summary



June 2022

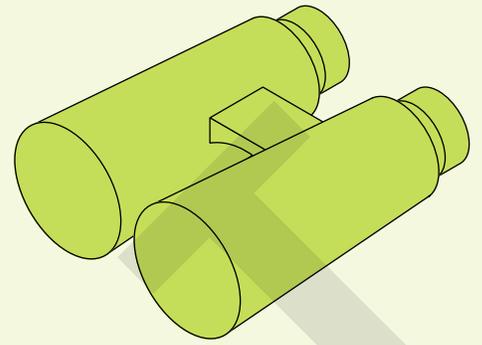


Seattle
Office of Planning &
Community Development

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Why is the City of Seattle Focusing on ETOD?



Seattle is experiencing growth and investments that have added pressure to the housing affordability and displacement crisis for low-income Black, Indigenous, and People of Color communities. With new transit coming in the next decade, putting more pressure on land and housing, we need a strong vision for what development without displacement could be in neighborhoods that are at risk of displacement. We hope to resource and collaborate with community based organizations, centers of faith, and local institutions to develop of a vision that centers on community power, community land ownership, affordable housing and other community benefits, safe and efficient transportation, a healthy environment, and economic justice.



We need solutions to address institutional racism that often come with major infrastructure investments, so that:

1. Communities who most depend on transit to get where they need to go, have reliable, accessible, fast, and free transportation options.
2. All communities have housing that is affordable, healthy, accessible, and supports the needs of their household.
3. Communities determine the priorities for new construction and development.
4. Community owns and stewards a significant percentage of land which cannot be bought and sold for profit. Communities determine the priorities for new construction and development.
5. Communities are safe and can seek accountability for harm through transformative justice* practices.
6. Communities have a healthy environment supported by universal design*, beautiful places to live, work, play, and gather.
7. Communities are powerful and actively participate in decision making.
8. Communities have a thriving natural environment and have infrastructure to weather climate disasters.

Background

To support this transformative work, the City of Seattle is leveraging a \$1.75 million grant from the Federal Transportation Authority to support equitable transit-oriented development along the West Seattle Ballard Link Extension (WSBLE) corridor. The purpose of the Pilot Program for Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Planning grant is to do comprehensive planning for the light rail line from Ballard to West Seattle and will have implications for equitable transit-oriented development throughout the City.

Proposed Outcomes:

The Equitable Transit Oriented Development (ETOD) Strategy and Implementation Plan will refine the City of Seattle's approach to advancing community-driven outcomes in high-capacity transit station areas piloted along the WSBLE alignment. By centering communities who are most impacted by investments in public infrastructure in the process—Black and Indigenous and people of color, immigrants and refugees, English language learners, LGBTQ people, youth, elders, and people living with disabilities—this approach attempts to address the root causes of displacement and deliver self-determination through community led and owned development. An Equitable TOD Strategy and Implementation Plan is actionable and may include identifying opportunity sites and funding mechanisms for key locations.

EDI Origin Story

The Equitable Development Initiative is a funding and policy program founded in 2015 to invest and grow community driven strategies to address displacement, focusing on land acquisitions, capital project funding, and capacity building with organizations led by communities at highest risk of displacement. The EDI program resulted from the advocacy efforts of South CORE, a coalition of 21 community organizations to mitigate the anticipated displacement in the 20-year growth strategy and comprehensive plan—Seattle 2035. Through a co-creation process with the Race and Social Equity Taskforce—a coalition of community-based organizations with long-term aspirations to own and develop community centered capital projects—and South CORE, staff and community organizers worked towards a vision for community controlled and inspired development and drafted the Equitable Development Implementation Plan, centered on five demonstration projects in the Chinatown International District, Central District, and Rainier Valley. These three neighborhoods represent areas in the city that had been redlined, actively disinvested in, experiencing significant displacement risk and where targeted investments in holistic anti-displacement solutions could result in keeping residents, community institutions, and small businesses rooted in place. Initially funded through a one-time \$16 million dollars resulting from the sale of a public property, the EDI program now has nearly \$20 million in annual funding.

How Did We Get Here?

The Case for Equitable Transit Oriented Development

Colonization of Seattle and the Puget Sound

In 1855, four years after white settlers arrived in the central Puget Sound Region, the Treaty of Point Elliott was signed, which severely limited land for indigenous people. A decade later, Seattle was incorporated and land laws were established to restrict Indigenous communities from having access to the very land they thrived upon.

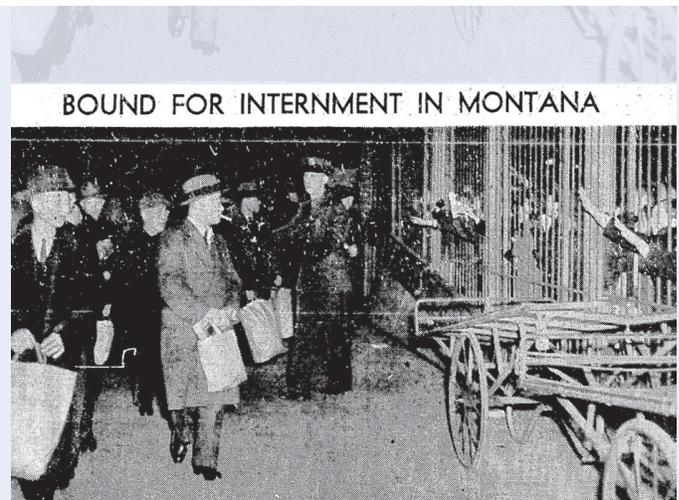
- 1851 ○ White settlers arrive
- 1855 ○ Point Elliott Treaty
- 1865 ○ Initial Seattle incorporation; Native Americans prohibited from living in Seattle unless employed by white residents
- 1869 ○ Current Seattle government established

We also see our transit systems, built largely with Chinese labor, used for reinforcing racism and exclusion. In 1942, as a result of Executive Order 9066, Japanese men were marched from the US Immigration Detention Building to King Street Station where they boarded a train for an internment camp at Fort Missoula, Montana.

Source: https://i0.wp.com/resisters.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/THEN-2_Times-photo.jpg?ssl=1

Our Region's History of Exclusion

We continue to experience the pattern of institutional exclusion of people of color in the late 1800s through Chinese Exclusion. In the 1850s, Chinese immigrants began arriving in America in significant numbers. These immigrants became integral in building the transcontinental railroads. With the influx of Chinese immigrants, competition for jobs and anti-Chinese sentiments increased. In 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act was enacted to ban Chinese immigrants from entering the county and deported those who arrived after 1880. Anti-Chinese sentiments escalated dramatically in 1886 when violent riots in Seattle erupted. In nearby Tacoma, a mob rounded up Chinese residents and forced to march eight miles to the Lake View train station where they were forced to board a train to Portland (Pfaelzer 2007, p. 221-222).



BOUND FOR INTERNMENT IN MONTANA

Through iron bars, friends and relatives of 150 interned Japanese men depart. Note paper sacks full of minimum belongings the prisoners took with them. They left on a train whose windows were barred.

Racially Restrictive Covenants

In addition to colonization and policies related to Chinese Exclusion and Japanese internment, we also see a long and extensive history of racial restrictive covenants and housing segregation in Seattle. Throughout the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, restrictive covenants played a major role in dictating municipal demographics. Neighborhoods in North Seattle, West Seattle, South Seattle and in the new suburbs across Lake Washington adopted deed restrictions to keep out non-White and sometimes Jewish families. Some central neighborhoods in Capitol Hill, Queen Anne, and Madison Park also armed themselves with covenants. By the end of the 1920s, a ring of deed restrictions meant that people of color had few options.

Transit and Real Estate Investments

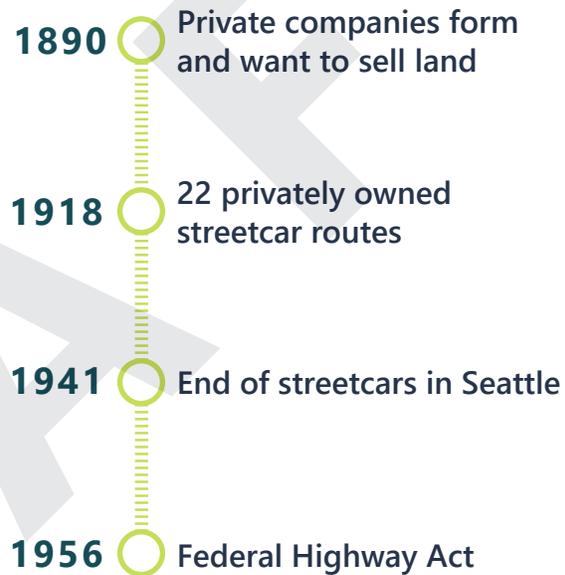
For a lot of us transportation represents how we get around connecting us to jobs, housing, services, education, healthcare. In fact, our economy requires a mobile workforce- employers need people to be able to get to work, we have centralized universities and healthcare facilities that people need to travel to.

A secondary purpose of infrastructure investments like transit is making the land near those investments more desirable. Rail transit and real estate are closely linked – local real estate and development interests have always and continue to be behind the scenes. Decisions about regional transportation – that is, how people throughout an urban area get around – are influenced heavily by powerful interests like developers who put profits above the public interest.

Streetcars

In 1890, when the city was still young, only 80,000 people, private companies began to form to build street railways to connect new developments to the center city where the jobs and services were. This included the Rainier Valley, which received its streetcar system primarily to facilitate land development. By 1918 (when Seattle had about 250,000 people) there were 22 separate, privately owned systems running over 200 miles of tracks.

- JK Edmiston and his partners bought 40 acre of land near the end of the line, logged the area and “launched a vigorous campaign to promote the new town.”
- Built a rail line by 1891 called “Rainier Avenue Electric Railway” and population boomed.
- Line eventually extended to Rainier Beach, with developments springing up in between



Many lines were built by business leaders interested more in selling land than running streetcars.

Once the neighborhoods were populated by new residents, the private owners stopped subsidizing the transit system they had created and by that time people depended on the streetcars to get around, the city was forced to buy and operate the streetcar network. Following similar patterns as other cities, the streetcar system was dismantled to make way for less expensive busses and private cars and by 1941 the last streetcar in Seattle stopped operating. Largely, this effort was fueled by General Motors who were also advocating at the federal level to push for highway development across the country.

Highways

Highways were built to serve predominately white workers who moved out of the City because of prejudice towards new Black and brown residents moving into the city neighborhoods where they lived. All of a sudden there is a significant portion of the workforce traveling from the suburbs to jobs in the City that were causing traffic on smaller local roadways.

- As cities were looking for a way to solve this new traffic problem, governments looked towards new federal highway money to create new road capacity AND serve as cover for racist 'urban renewal' strategies and the systematic destruction of thriving black and brown communities across the country. "The process of routing roads through black communities was so common it even had a name among critics: 'White roads through black bedrooms.'"
- "In the first 20 years of the federal interstate system alone, Foxx said, highway construction displaced 475,000 families and over a million Americans. Most of them were low-income people of color in urban cores." - Transportation Secretary Foxx
- Transportation and real estate/ displacement have always been inextricably linked.

In our region, highways construction enabled and reinforced patterns of suburban sprawl and literally cut the Chinatown international district in half, both displacing residents and community institutions but also physically separating the community. There was major organizing and advocacy when the highways was constructed from community leaders and coalitions and CID communities continue to push for remediation of the harm that I5 continues to cause in the neighborhood.

Community Advocacy Against Displacement

The displacement of Nihonmachi and the Chinatown International District due to construction of I-5 in the 1950s was a part a pattern of institutional racism that resulted in disinvestments, continued displacement and large scale projects like Kingdome. In 1971, as Kingdome was being planned, the neglect of communities of color exposed disparities including lack of decent housing, inadequate social and health services, and racial discrimination. These conditions and injustices gave birth to a movement of local community organizing and advocacy efforts that resulted in the establishment of the International District Improvement Association (today know as InterIm CDA), the International District Community Health Clinic and the Seattle Chinatown International District Preservation Development Authority.

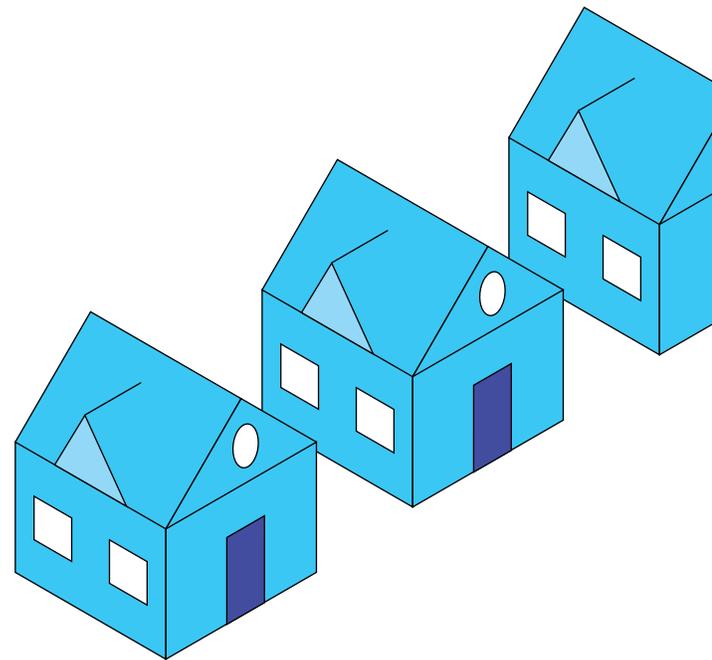


How is the City Developing an ETOD Strategy?

City policies and investments often have disproportionate impacts on communities color, but they are often not part of designing processes from the beginning when the approach is shaped, core foundational questions are asked or decisions are made. Our processes are often rigid and do not allow space to adapt to our dynamic communities. We often engage community when core decisions are already made and outcomes are already defined. We seek to plan differently, challenge assumptions and identify blind spots that City planners often have about our communities.

Process:

In May of 2021, City staff recruited five core steering committee members to develop a framework and process advancing the ETOD Strategy and Implementation Plan. With support from the FTA funds, staff were able to incorporate the voices of five committee members who brought expertise in community visioning, creative facilitation and creating equitable processes to help to define values, vision, and the scope for a larger engagement process. Over the course of six months, the core steering group met with staff to ground in the current opportunity, learn from local and national equitable TOD examples, and co-develop deliverables that is summarized below.



An ETOD Strategy Starts with a Vision

Visioning is a practice used to imagine what we want the future to look like, but it's not always a practice that comes easily. Simply put, visioning work is science fiction. It can mean moving beyond what is possible to imagine a future- or a neighborhood- that has never existed before. Science fiction authors have used their writing to challenge social and political norms, in the same way we hope to push back against the "inevitability" of displacement resulting from investments in public infrastructure like transit.

"We live in capitalism. Its power seems inescapable. But then, so did the divine right of kings. Any human power can be resisted and changed by human beings,"

— exclaimed science fiction author Ursula K. LeGuin in 2014 National Book Award acceptance speech.

Visionary fiction author and abolitionist Walida Imarisha built on the sentiment,

"This is precisely why we need science fiction: It allows us to imagine possibilities outside of what exists today. The only way we know we can challenge the divine right of kings is by being able to imagine a world where kings no longer rule us—or do not even exist."

Visioning works must be led by the communities closest to the impact, those who have been made vulnerable to displacement by structural racism and white supremacy.

Visioning work is important for the kind of planning and policy making we are setting up through the ETOD Core Steering Group for a few important reasons:

- Vision inspires: You can certainly move someone to action based on injustice and negative impacts for a short-term action but co-creating and sharing a vision can inspire and keep people engaged for the long term.
- North star: when you get stuck and lost in process, a strong and transformative vision helps you take intermediate steps that keep you on track.
- Vision can go beyond what is possible now: Sometimes people get stuck in what is possible or believable, visioning helps us imagine beyond our current context and without compromise.
- Vision can ask big question: what does it look like for BIPOC, people with disability, queer and trans, low-income communities to be free?

The Core Steering Group developed a draft vision that inspires and helps us imagine a different outcome, one where all communities thrive.

ETOD Vision

“People are aware that they cannot continue in the same old way but are immobilized because they cannot imagine an alternative. We need a vision that recognizes that we are at one of the great turning points in human history when the survival of our planet and the restoration of our humanity require a great sea change in our ecological, economic, political, and spiritual values.”

—Grace Lee Bogs

Communities who most depend on transit to get where they need to go have reliable, accessible, fast, and affordable transportation options.

All communities have housing that is affordable, healthy, accessible, and supports the needs of their household.

Communities determine the priorities for new construction and development.

Community owns and stewards a significant percentage of land which cannot be bought and sold for profit.

Communities are safe and can seek accountability for harm through transformative justice practices.

Communities have a healthy environment supported by universal design, beautiful places to live, work, play, and gather.

Communities are powerful and actively participate in decision making.

Communities have a thriving natural environment and have infrastructure to weather climate disasters.

How Do We Achieve This Vision?

While the vision clarifies the long-term end goal, we rely on values to help determine the strategy and tactics to achieve the vision. The Core Steering Group set process and implementation values to clearly communicate *how* we will work together and as a *filter* to guide the work moving forward.

Process Values:

1. Transparency: with each other and from the City.
2. Move at the speed of trust.
3. Honor and celebrate lived experience and expertise.
4. Culture of feedback, flexibility, and authenticity.
5. Take things slow and break down jargon and industry language
6. Consent based decision making
7. Center people and communities who have experienced harm, ensuring representation from communities often left out of planning processes including Black and indigenous and people of color, immigrants and refugees, English language learners, LGBTQ people, youth, elders, people living with disabilities, people who are un-housed, and people with intersecting identities and multiple community ties.
8. Lead with Race and intersectionality.

Implementation Values

1. Land, housing, and development should be used for direct community benefit, not profit
2. We keep our communities safe: no solutions that increase policing
3. Strategies and tactics should create opportunities for community wealth building
4. Transportation and mobility that create access for communities who depend on transit to get where they need to go.
5. Care for each other: create opportunities for healing
6. Solutions that build community power and resilience
7. Center solutions that reduce carbon emissions and create a healthy environment
8. Solutions that center community self determination
9. Build on local assets and capacity
10. Solutions that are community originated and have broad community support
11. Address systems and shift power

What Do We Mean When We Say ETOD?

When we say Equitable Transit Oriented Development, we think about who is leading the work, what is the process and what are the outcomes?

- **Community will identify through this process.**
- **Who is leading, what are the outcomes, what is the process?**
- **Development led by communities of color, traditionally marginalized communities, and those at the highest risk of displacement. Key characteristics include community self-determination in the planning and design of the building, and community ownership.**

The implementation values helped to determine the scope of the project and answer the question, what do we mean when we say equitable transit-oriented development? This scope sets the stage for the strategy and tactics to be developed in the next phase of the project. Any ETOD strategy must address the following:

- 1. Community Power:**
Builds Community Power through community ownership and permanent stewardship of land, investing in community organizing, rooted in community vision and process, and centered in systems change.
- 2. Starts with Land Ownership:**
Conversations about zoning, density, and transit supportive uses must be preceded by removing speculative pressures and banking land for community ownership early and at scale.
- 3. Holistic Community Benefits:**
Includes both rental and ownership housing that is affordable, but also incorporates other community identified uses such as childcare, cultural space, arts, healthy food, good jobs, healthcare, education, small businesses, open space and places to play, etc.
- 4. Results in Mobility and access justice**
including fare affordability, universal design, connectivity, safety.
- 5. Promotes economic justice**
through the tools we develop to finance community projects, creating opportunities for community wealth building, and commercial ownership models.
- 6. A healthy environment**
that promotes a sense of belonging and includes strengthening mitigation and adaptation to climate change and community resiliency and health.

While this scope may seem outside the current purview of the City or Sound Transit, strong, resilient communities demand an intersecting and systemic approach to planning and development.

How Do We Achieve This Vision? – Building Community

The Core Steering group recommended an initial structure to determine a final Equitable TOD Strategy and Implementation Plan. The proposed process is rooted in the process values identified above and centers healing, community knowledge and expertise, youth voice, and is rooted in place.



Roles

Community Advisory Group:

This is the main decision-making body and will be responsible for issue identification, making proposals, and directing staff and technical advisory group members to research tasks, feasibility analyses, etc. The group will be comprised of community members including youth, representatives from community-based groups, place-based organizations with equitable development expertise, advocacy capacity, and members of the Place-based strategy groups.

Technical Support Group:

This group will be responsive to the needs of the Community Advisory Group and the Place-Based Strategy Groups. This group will be comprised of City and Agency staff, developers, philanthropy, and finance and investment practitioners.

Place-based Strategy Groups:

Place-based Strategy Groups will be identified in neighborhoods that will have a light rail station and are facing high-risk of displacement. Strategy Groups in these neighborhoods, existing or developed through this grant, will analyze and develop an ETOD Vision and Implementation Plan that is reflective of the unique circumstance in the neighborhood. Staff will work with existing coalitions and work groups or help develop new formations that can take on this body of work. **Two representatives of the work groups will join the Community Advisory Group to support the reciprocal development of the Strategy and Implementation Plan.** One unique task for the Place-based Strategy Groups will be to identify an approach to addressing the Agency owned surplus/ remnant parcels in the neighborhood once construction is complete.



The work plan will be comprised of three phases:

1. Onboarding and healing: The Core Steering Group recommended a healing and trust building component in order to create a strong foundation for decision making.
2. Core Work Program: Refinement of the foundational work drafted by the Core Steering Group and identifying the central strategies.
3. The development of an implementation plan and eventual implementation.



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